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Lt. Gov. Ipulasi delivers State of the Territory 2008 Address

(UTULEI) – Lieutenant Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia today delivered the State of the Territory address in a joint session of the 30th Legislature – Third Regular Session at the Fono Guest Fale in Fagatogo on Monday, January 14, 2008.

The following is the official English text of the State of the Territory 2008:

STATE OF THE TERRITORY ADDRESS BEFORE THE 30th LEGISLATURE THIRD REGULAR SESSION 2008

FOREWORD

On behalf of Governor Togiola Tulafono, it's an honor for me to stand before you in American Samoa's Fono chamber, where generations of public servants have come together to enact the will of the people.

Governor Togiola Tulafono is not able to join us this morning as he continues to make full-recovery from his recent medical operation. He sends his regrets and best wishes to our leaders and the people of American Samoa. He also extends his appreciation for all your support and prayers. Our prayers and thoughts are with him and First Lady Mary and their children during this time.

Before I begin, let us take a moment to honor the memories of our leaders, including Attorney General Sialega Togafau, Senator HC Faiivae Galea'i, Associate Judge Sagapolutele Malaeola, Malaetele Dr. Lui Tuitele, and others whose combined service to our government equals many decades. Let us also take a moment to honor our sons and daughters who have made the ultimate sacrifice so that you and I, and our beloved children may live in a free world.

Please join me in a moment of silence in memory of our leaders and sons and daughters whose services and sacrifices are etched in our hearts. *(Continued on page 5)*

Gov. Togiola terminates ASG Treasurer Velega Savali

A new appointment to take the helm as Treasurer for the American Samoa Government is yet to be announced after Governor Togiola Tulafono terminated the employment of ASG Treasurer Velega Savali, who refused to resign per the Governor's initial request.

Togiola gave Velega up until January 9 to submit his resignation letter or otherwise face termination. All cabinet members serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

The Governor's initial letter to Velega cited the Treasurer's failure to communicate with the Chief Executive regarding the status of ASG's deteriorating finances, as one of the reasons he was asked to step down.

Velega was appointed by Governor Togiola to serve as Treasurer in 2005 after the initial selection, Francis Leasiolagi, was rejected for confirmation by the Senate.

Upon receiving the Governor's letter, Velega informed the Treasury staff that he will not resign but will leave it up to the Governor to exercise his executive authority to remove him if that was his choice.

On Thursday evening, while Velega was exercising at the Ili'i Golf Course area, a termination letter from the Governor was hand delivered to him. This occurred three hours after Velega wrote to the Governor informing him that he was not resigning, but "you can go ahead and remove me from office by using your authority as Governor."

This response from Velega sparked a negative reaction from some veteran government officials and traditional leaders who believe Velega should have honored the Governor's request and gone out quietly instead of challenging the executive decision.

Togiola's January 10 letter terminated Velega's services as Treasurer "effective immediately."

Velega was instructed to surrender all government papers, records, and property in his possession or custody to Deputy Treasurer Ueligitone Tonumaipea or an official from the Governor's Office in exchange for a receipt.

Velega refused to resign because he believed the Governor was misinformed about the ASG's financial situation. Several of Velega's supporters have come together to back the now former Treasurer, saying that it was under Velega's supervision that the ASG managed to collect money on old debts like land leases, back taxes, and bad checks.

"The distortion between the fact that Treasury has maintained a positive cash flow under my directorship and your perceived situational deterioration is unsettling," Velega wrote. "Monetary status quo has been unfailingly consistent under my supervision."

Because of that, Velega said he felt there was no need to approach the Governor with a plan of proposed solutions to resolve what Togiola described as "financial dilemmas".

Velega claims that the Treasury Department was in such a financial mess when he took over in August 2005 but since he came aboard, the Treasury Department is now one that is "characterized by policy and procedure adherence, financial transparency, and fiscal responsibility. Indeed it is a department I am proud to lead," he wrote.

Velega continued, "I naively assumed you would view our momentum of progressive and fruitful change for the betterment of the Samoan people as proof of my dedication and altruistic exertion of my duties....Your stated lack of trust and confidence in my professional skills and attributes defies common logic and I do not understand it."

He concluded, "I do not appreciate your slanderous defamation of my character. I am a man of inherent integrity and have exercised due diligence in executing my duties as Treasurer."

Velega, who turned 65 on Friday, Jan 11, is reported to be filing the necessary paperwork for retirement.

Governor Togiola wrote, "I regret that this final action is required and I wish you the best in your future endeavors."

Velega leaves behind an emotional staff which he has advised to continue serving the government and territory the best they could, and not make any poor choices on his account.

DOE adds another new school bus to their fleet

Procurement Office director Seui Laau presented a brand new school bus to Director of Education Dr. Claire Poumele today. The new arrival brings the total number of operable DOE school buses to 32.

The new arrival is the third and final school bus purchased last year for \$73,000 each (\$219,000 total). The other two buses arrived a few months ago and the delayed arrival of the third one, according to Seui, was due to unforeseen circumstances.

The new bus, which will be used for the Early Childhood Education (ECE) students, features a retractable metal bar that can be automatically controlled by the bus driver or otherwise moved manually.

The metal bar is located on the front of the bus below the engine and adds an extra security feature which protects youngsters from being accidentally hit.

Seui explained that because the bus driver sits so high at the wheel behind a protruding large engine, he/she could have a difficult time seeing a young person walking or running in front of the bus when it is parked.

But with the metal bar, the risk of a bus driver running over a student is greatly decreased.

Dr. Poumele accepted the school bus on behalf of DOE and expressed her gratitude for the wonderful addition which will assist the DOE with its student services operations.

Gov. Togiola hospitalized with discomfort of stomach pain

(UTULEI) – Governor Togiola Tulafono was admitted to LBJ Medical Center in Faga’alu on Sunday morning, January 6, 2008 for observation and evaluation after experiencing discomfort from stomach pain.

The following is the initial statement from the Governor’s Chief of Staff Mr. Pati Faiai:

“On Sunday at 9am, January 6, 2008, Governor Togiola Tulafono was admitted to LBJ Medical Center in Faga’alu for observation and evaluation after experiencing discomfort from stomach pain. I wish to say that Governor Togiola is doing well and is much more comfortable. The Governor’s condition is much improved since entering the hospital emergency room Sunday morning. Governor Togiola has asked me to say to all of the people of American Samoa that he is doing fine and getting some rest. The Governor expresses his sincere gratitude to all the people that have visited or tried to visit him in the Hospital and he also says thank you to all for keeping him in your prayers.”

Lt. Governor Ipulasi provides update on Governor Togiola’s recovery

Governor Togiola Tulafono underwent a second operation on Sunday evening and has now been moved to the Intensive Care Unit for close observation. Togiola was admitted to the LBJ Medical Center last week after complaining of stomach pains that resulted in him having to undergo an appendectomy.

“I continue to be in close communication with Governor Togiola, First Lady Maryann, and the hospital physician who is attending to the Governor,” Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia said in a statement, Tuesday, January 15th.

Ipulasi reports that the Governor’s vital signs are stable and “he is feeling better” following the second procedure.

The Governor and First Lady extend their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and leaders of American Samoa for their kindness and prayers.

Doctors maintain a strict visitation policy for the Governor and the Office of the Governor requests the public to please respect the doctors’ orders by refraining from making personal visits to the Governor at this time.

“The Governor’s full and speedy recovery is a top priority,” Ipulasi wrote.

Ipulasi asks the people of American Samoa for their continued prayers for Governor Togiola, Mary and the family during this time.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By: Stan Sorensen, Historian, Office of the Governor

On January 12, 1925, President Calvin Coolidge signed Executive Order No. 4125, which, under the authority of Section 28 (e) of the Immigration Act of 1924, gave consular powers to the Governors of American Samoa and Guam.

On January 12, 1930, Commodore Geoffrey Blake, RN, commanding "HMS *Dunedin*, flagship of the Royal Navy's small New Zealand station, sailed into Apia Harbor at 4 pm....with men from the Royal Marines and a seaplane from the Hobsonville air base aboard." Western Samoa's Administrator, Colonel Stephen Allen, had requested these forces to hunt down *Mau* members who were hiding in the bush behind the villages of Vaiusu, Le'auva'a, Faleasi'u and Fasito'otai.

On January 13, 1928, Western Samoan *Mau* leader Olaf Frederick Nelson was deported from Western Samoa to exile in New Zealand. On this date, the *Man's* members wore their distinctive uniform for the first time. It consisted of a maroon turban, blue (some accounts say purple) 'ie lavalava with a single white stripe, and a white singlet.

On January 15, 1936, Lieutenant Commander Thomas Benjamin Fitzpatrick relieved Captain Otto Carl Dowling and began his six-day term as American Samoa's 24th naval governor (acting: until January 20, 1936).

On January 15, 1938, a memorial service for Captain Edwin Musick and the crew of the *Samoa Clipper* was held aboard MV *Matua*, a ship belonging to the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand. The *Matua's* log book recorded the occasion as follows: "3.52 pm. Rang Stand By. 3.56 pm. Stop. 4.00 pm. Smooth sea, mod. Nthly. Swell, Fine & Clear. Memorial service for crew of Pan-American flying boat "Samoa Clipper" held over spot where flying boat crashed and sank with all hands at 9am. 11th. Jan. 1938. Lat. 14.08 S. Long. 170.51 W. 4.12 pm. Full Speed." A "giant orchid wreath was prepared for the memorial service" by the people of Tutuila, and was dropped into the ocean at the crash site.

On January 15, 1944, the First Samoan Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve was disbanded, and its personnel were assigned to the Marine Barracks at the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila. The battalion's strength was "9 Marine officers, 1 Navy officer, 32 American Marines and 494 Samoan Marines."

On January 15, 1970, John Morse Haydon, American Samoa's ninth appointed civilian governor, became the Territory's first Historic Preservation Officer (then called "State Liaison Officer"). In a letter to National Park Service Director George B. Hartzog, he wrote: "To the best of my knowledge, there is no state liaison officer, so I therefore designate myself as the State Liaison Officer, and I look forward to working with your office."

On January 16, 1888, "Asi of Vaimauga, Mauga Manuma of Pago Pago and Tuiletufuga of Apia" were exiled by the Germans to Jaluit in the Marshall Islands as associates of Malietoa Laupepa, who had been exiled the previous September.

On January 16, 1903, each *matua* who signed the Deed of Cession of Tutuila received a watch, a medal and a diploma from President Theodore Roosevelt.

On January 17, 1987, Hurricane "Tusi," a "howling hurricane that destroyed virtually 100% of the structures in Faleasao, Fitiuta and Sili, [and] 90% of the structures in Ta'u and Ofu and half of those in Olosega" ripped through the Manu'a Islands, but avoided Tutuila.

On January 15, 1954, the first Japanese fishing boat delivered a load of tuna to the Van Camp cannery.

ASG RADIO PROGRAM

With: Gov. Togiola Tulafono

On: Showers of Blessings FM 104.7

Saturdays @ 7a.m.

Call: 699-8123/8124

Togiola to submit proposed salary reclassification bill to the Fono

Governor Togiola Tulafono is expected to submit to the Fono a bill that proposes a salary reclassification for local public school teachers.

This was one of the topics Togiola discussed during his weekend radio program.

Under the reclassification, a person employed as a school principal but later transferred to work out of the main office will not receive the same salary as they were getting while serving as school principal.

According to Togiola, a vice principal promoted to a higher position is not earning the salary that comes with the new title, because their predecessor is still receiving the principal's salary, even though the person has moved over to work at the DOE's main office.

The Governor said this practice needs to stop because it is creating problems for personnel who are promoted to leadership jobs in schools.

Not only will the proposed bill address a salary reclassification, it also proposes to offer bonuses to public school teachers who meet continuing education goals set forth by the Department of Education.

The Governor added that if a teacher does not meet the continuing education requirements, they will not receive the bonus.

After listening to the radio program, numerous public school teachers have expressed their strong support of the proposed bill, with all of them anxiously looking forward to the promised bonuses.

Department of Parks and Recreation issues public notice to ban sand mining

Parks and Recreation Director Taamuvaigafa Iakopo did not approve the removal of sand from Utulei Beach for the golf course and now he is urging the general public to call his office or the Department of Public Safety to report any removal of sand from local beaches.

In a statement, Taamu wrote, "The Department of Parks and Recreation again reminds the general public that sand mining is not allowed, due to shoreline being washed away." He added, "The removal of sand from Utulei Beach, Fagaalu Beach, and Fatumafuti is banned from the public."

Taamu has become vocal about the sand mining issue after local media published photos of sand being removed from the Utulei Beach and later transported to the golf course.

The practice of removing sand from local beaches is very common in the territory, with many residents using the sand for landscaping purposes.

Taamu has informed the directors of the Department of Commerce and the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency about his action and has requested cooperation from all agencies to help in enforcing the sand mining ban.

In addition, he is also seeking assistance from the police, hoping that they will take action when members of the public call in to report cases of sand mining.

The continuous mining of sand may not seem like a big deal but if the practice is not stopped, erosion will become a major problem for coastal roads and local wildlife will be affected.

ASCC will enforce higher tuition rates by spring semester

Students planning to take classes at the American Samoa Community College during the upcoming 2008 Spring Semester will be faced with a tuition hike that affects both resident and non-resident students.

The increase in tuition fees is necessary as according to testimony provided by ASCC officials during the college's budget hearing before the Fono last year, the cost to educate one student at ASCC amounts to an estimated \$7,314 annually.

However, each student is only paying a percentage of that, \$1,400 per year to be exact.

Before the tuition hike, resident students were charged \$45 per credit while non-resident students were paying \$60 per credit.

The higher tuition rates will raise the charge for resident students by \$20 to \$65 per credit while non-resident students will see a \$15 increase, meaning it'll cost them \$75 per credit.

All questions, concerns, and comments about the new tuition fees and services offered at the ASCC can be forwarded directly to 699-9155.

Registration for Spring Semester is ongoing for both returning and new students.

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STATE OF THE ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE

The year 2007 was a challenging year for American Samoa. Therefore, it is appropriate that I ask you to join me in this year's "Call to Action" so that together we can focus on the immediate challenges and seek solutions that will move us forward in this new year of 2008.

To begin, let us acknowledge that we ended the 2007 fiscal year in the black. ASG departments and branches worked very hard within very confined budgets this past year. I commend all of you for working with Treasury and Budget and other agencies to achieve this very challenging task. Although fiscal stability is good news, we still face many challenges in the future but especially now.

- Economic indicators show that 2007 was a time of financial hardship. Cost of living increased by 7 percent in the 4th quarter compared to 4.4% in the 3rd quarter. This increase was due mainly to increased fuel costs. Housing costs increased by 6% due to higher utility costs and cost of food increased by 10% in the 4th quarter. The minimum wage increased, resulting in higher prices. Together, these indicators confirm our participation in the world economy and our vulnerability to the changes in a fast-paced global economy.

Nonetheless, our "Call to Action" views this vulnerability as an opportunity and a challenge. This means speaking of things that are important to our economic and social future today.

- As most of you have noticed over the past weeks, ASG road projects continue to change the face of the Territory, providing for more convenient and safe travel over our highways. One such project is the Avau-Airport Junction resurfacing, which will improve the highway from the village of Avau to the three-way intersection in Nu'uuli. This project is funded to the tune of \$1.6 million.
- Other projects include the Vatia Shoreline Protection, the Aoa, Iliili, Masefau, Taputimu, Aua-Afono-Fagaitua Roads, the Fagasa Landslide Restoration, and some drainage projects. Together these projects total \$14.5 million.
- ASG has received \$8.3 million for the Bay Area road project, the biggest road project of the year, which is aimed at enhancing and supporting traveler safety and economic development of the territory. This project also falls right in line with our current plan to revitalize the Downtown area. This new road will be supported by American Samoa's new modern marketplace, our redesigned marina, our new soccer stadium in Pago Pago and the support of businesses located downtown. We look forward to the modern, sophisticated facelift of our downtown area and the new commerce that it will spur in 2008.
- The total value of agricultural production was \$58.2 million in 2007, with \$36 million going for family consumption and \$22 million for commercial sales. More and more, our local farmers are answering the call to provide nutritious produce for our local consumption. We look forward to plans that will help our farmers meet the increased demand in the latter part of the year as the Territory hosts the 10th Festival of the Pacific Arts.
- After much planning and deliberation among government agencies and our private sector, we adopted the Territorial General Plan by Executive Order 005-2007 aimed at providing a consolidated economic and social development plan for American Samoa. The Plan will provide guidance for the development of all sectors of government and the economy as we forge ahead in this New Year.
- Similarly, the Governor's Economic Advisory Council was established to serve as a vehicle for private sector input on economic development policies. We believe this partnership will flourish as we address issues such as Tax Reforms, Immigration, business licensing, etc.
- American Samoa's plan for Fiber Optic is very close to finalization. Once it becomes available, we can expect improvement and access to new telecommunications options and a number of economic opportunities. Some of these opportunities include the advent of call centers and cheaper telecommunications with more advanced services.

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State of the Territory *(continued from page 5)*

Broader capacity makes for faster internet connection and opens the door to applications such as telemedicine and distance learning that will bring our isolated islands much closer to the rest of the world.

- In 2007, we saw the complete renovation of two important historical sites—Mauga o Ali'i and the Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium. It is important to maintain our historical buildings because they are part of American Samoa's history and identity. The Lee Auditorium now hosts many government and community programs—such as the splendid production of the “Fiddler on the Roof” by the gifted students and staff of the American Samoa Community College.
- This coming year will bear witness to the demolition of the old Fagatogo Market, making way for the long-awaited modern market that will showcase a contemporary two-story building to accommodate our local farmers and fishermen, complete with a food court, and other agricultural related businesses.
- 2007 saw the completion of the renovation and extension of our historic Runway 8-26. This \$6.8 million project will no doubt help to increase airport productivity, higher levels of passenger satisfaction, and further support U.S. military movement in the Pacific region.
- The Port Administration has begun financial preparations for the construction of our \$1.9 million air traffic control tower, and through funding from the FAA, we now have a new Airport Administration Building.
- The Development Bank of American Samoa provided services for loans totaling \$3 million. I am proud to announce that in 2007, the HUD HOME projects were all completed by year's end with a total of 27 home repairs and 18 new homes.
- DBAS also conducted HUD Home workshops and application in-takes to provide these same services to the people of Manu'a.
- DBAS improved its accounting system and assisted Territorial Registrar's Office to computerize information to facilitate more efficient retrieval of data.

In 2007, American Samoa saw many initiatives dedicated to the conservation and protection of our environment. Collaborations between agencies, businesses, and community groups have resulted in the development of important programs, increased public awareness, and appreciation of our natural environment.

As the official host of the 10th Festival of Pacific Arts this summer, I urge you to keep moving forward with this mindset and appreciation for our natural beauty. Let's preserve and maintain our natural environment for our children and their children.

- In August, American Samoa successfully hosted the 18th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting. More than 100 participants gathered to discuss issues that impact our environment.
- At the meeting, Governor Togiola signed an historic Executive Order that will help the Territory control our greenhouse gas emissions – American Samoa's contribution to the region to help stem the tide of global warming.
- In an earnest effort to promote better management of sustainable resources, we announced a ban on Big Fish Harvesting to ensure that local fisheries are given an opportunity to replenish our sea for the benefit of future generations.
- American Samoa's Water Laboratory is rated one of the best in the Pacific by the USEPA. As a result, we have been asked to provide technical assistance to other U.S. affiliated entities.
- EPA continues its commitment to the protection of our people by ensuring the quality of our drinking water and the safety of our waterways. *(continued on page 7)*

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- For the first time, EPA secured funds targeted specifically for hazardous material clean up programs.

After careful deliberation and with critical input from our private sector and economic advisory council, we will be submitting our legislative proposal to make our Tourism department a semi-independent agency. With this important change, we intend for our private sector to take a greater role in the development of tourism in the Territory. This partnership should yield much better results for the development of tourism and our economy.

STATE OF EDUCATION

2007 revealed many challenges in our educational system. However, we worked through these challenges together and we have several achievements and goals to reflect upon and look forward to:

- In an effort to provide quality teachers for our children under the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act, 53 more teachers earned BA degrees in Elementary Education. 75 teachers continue to pursue their BA degrees through the University of Hawai'i cohort program.
- The age when every Samoan spoke their native language proficiently continues to become a thing of the past. With so much emphasis on English proficiency as the means to educational success, it is easy to understand how we have reached this point. To ensure that our children value and attain proficiency in Samoan as well as English, DOE has developed English and Samoan Language Proficiency Standards as part of American Samoa's educational standards.
- With the growing problems caused by obesity like diabetes, hypertension, gout, high blood pressure and chronic heart disease, we need to instill in our children the value of physical fitness as a critical part of their lifestyles. DOE has implemented a comprehensive Health Program at the Elementary Level to strengthen the Physical Education Program at all grade levels.
- DOE dedicated several new buildings this past year: Tafuna High School, Tafuna Elementary, and the \$1.2 million two-story building for Nu'uuli-Voc-Tech.
- DOE has upgraded the Chancery Data System to allow schools to produce computerized report cards, track student enrollment and to assist in compiling data for federal reports and evaluation.
- In November, 26 students enrolled in San Diego State's MA program in Leadership and Counseling.
- A similar program in the much-needed area of accounting will be offered locally this month through a partnership with Chaminade University and another one in law-enforcement is also set to begin this year.
- ASCC began to offer classes for the new four-year degree in Teacher Education. This was the result of many years of hard work of the faculty and the Board of Higher Education.
- The Board of Higher Education reclassified the Trades & Industry Department into the Institute of Trades and Technology. This will assist in enhancing and preparing a workforce in the various areas of computer technology, automotive repair, and many other areas that will meet the unique needs of both the public and private sector.

Finally, I am happy to announce that the Administration is sending to the Fono this Session, our teacher reclassification bill, which is still being developed. It is our sincere hope and intent that teachers in the Territory should be paid fair value for the tremendous service they provide for our students. We intend to provide clarity on basic entry levels according to credentials and experience. Passage of this administration proposal shall be a priority in this New Year.

STATE OF HEALTHCARE

We continue to focus on meeting the healthcare needs of our people. The American Samoa Medical Center and the Department of Health are working hard to improve their services and programs. *(continued on page 8)*

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- The LBJ Medical Center has completed a makeover of the new Pediatric Ward, which includes \$1.7 million worth of modern hospital equipment that will improve pediatric services and treatment for our people.
- Opened its new clinic where patients don't have to wait in the emergency room but can call the clinic for appointments.
- Hired additional doctors to alleviate the shortage of doctors serving our people.
- Department of Health continues to do outreach programs to villages and schools.
- This summer, the Veterans Tafuna Clinic was dedicated to meet the needs of our many veterans living in the Territory.

To help LBJ provide healthcare to our residents, we are submitting legislation that will assist them in meeting federal requirements for securing Medicare funding, through our Advanced Directives legislation.

PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR \$20MILLION LOAN

We have identified a list of priority projects that we will pursue using the \$20 million loan. These projects include the renovation of the Fono Building, the Fiber Optic Cable Project, harbor and dredging projects, a new tug boat for the Port Administration, a new antenna for KVZK, a new airport hangar, and the 10th Festival of Pacific Arts. We believe these projects will improve our infrastructure and economic development goals.

CONCERNS ON HIGH RISK STATUS

While I have spoken of the good, there are also considerable challenges that we need to resolve in the present.

They include the following:

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security has frozen all funds for Homeland Security due to administrative deficiencies.
- Department of Education has been designated "high risk" by USDOE in the areas of procurement, property management, and payroll of Federal education grants.
- WIC & FOODSTAMP programs are working hard to meet reporting requirements, as they await a response on their "high risk" status.
- LBJ has begun to pay back the \$9 million it owes to Medicaid.

For each of these challenges, ASG continues to develop action plans to address these concerns in the present. We ask that we all support these entities and their efforts.

There is also much concern regarding the impact of the federal minimum wage mandate on the two canneries and local businesses. ASG is working with federal officials to provide critical input on the next \$.50 increase that will take effect this summer. The Territory continues to work vigorously through our Delegate and other members of Congress who have lent their support to American Samoa, including Senator Fofogao Samoa Daniel K. Inouye, Senator Jeff Bingaman and Senator Daniel Akaka. We remain vigilant in our work to ensure that the minimum wage is good for the Territory's economy as a whole.

NOTEWORTHY

Before I end, let us take note of a few worthy things whose success depends on all of us working together.

- **Pacific Arts Festival**

Since its inception in 1972, the Festival of Pacific Arts has become the premiere gathering where Pacific Islanders gather to celebrate and promote our indigenous and modern traditions. *(continued on page 9)*

State of the Territory *(continued from page 8)*

American Samoa will host the 10th Festival of Pacific Arts in July and August and we expect close to 2,000 participants to join us in this—Su'iga'ula a le Atuvasa" or threading of the Oceanic ula (lei) – where together Pacific people can express fully one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world.

In following our government-private sector partnership approach, the Festival Task Force has established the Festival food voucher program so that our local vendors have the opportunity to participate in providing food for festival participants.

- **Future Political Status Study Commission Report**

The Political Status Commission has completed its report and their recommendation is that we retain our current status as an “unincorporated and unorganized territory of the U.S.” The Commission’s recommendations have been forwarded to the Fono, and we eagerly await their response. In preparation for a Constitutional Convention, we strongly encourage the people of American Samoa to examine the Commission’s report, which is available at www.americansamoa.gov, and decide what they think is best for American Samoa.

SEND OFF

Indeed, 2007 was a challenging one for American Samoa. But in this “Call to Action,” this Administration views these challenges as opportunities for all of us to put our collective ‘best foot’ forward. The leaders and the people of American Samoa believe we can solve, create, and do the impossible in the present. We look forward to working closely with all of you in heeding this important call for 2008.

DPW Projects: Construction of seawalls and roads across the territory

Department of Public Works director Taeaotui Punafo Tilei says their office is working hard on numerous ongoing projects that are expected to be completed this year.

The projects include construction work in both Tutuila and the Manu’a Islands, with funding provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

Currently, DPW’s Maintenance and Operations (M&O) employees stationed in Manu’a are constructing a two-mile, two-lane concrete road from Ofu to Olosega. This particular project is about 50% completed.

Road projects are ongoing as far east as Aoa where DPW workers are currently involved in the construction of a much needed seawall and rural road. Not far away in Masefau village, construction of the rural road there is about 40% complete.

Taeaotui said that both the seawall and rural road in Vatia are complete, and a dedication ceremony has been tentatively scheduled for next month. The project was overseen by Public Works while the work was carried out by McConnell Dowell.

On the west side, Taeaotui is proud to report that the Taputimu road project is about 98% complete, while the Ili’ili rural road project is almost at the half way mark (30%).

The mountain in Fagatogo (facing the marketplace) that caused devastating damages during the fatal mudslides of 2003 will be stabilized by McConnell Dowell during the same time the contractors carry out work on the multi-million-dollar Phase II project on the main highway between Pago Pago and Fagatogo.

Taeaotui said that the contract to stabilize the mountain was put out for bid and designed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and McConnell Dowell secured that contract as well, separate from the one issued for Phase II.

Although there are two separate contracts, Taeaotui said that the two projects will be carried out at the same time.

Over the next month, DPW will be advertising for “Request for Qualification” (RFQ) for 4 other road projects, in addition to the Petesa/Happy Valley project, which is the one currently being advertised.

Suspected outbreak of mumps sparks concern from Department of Health

The Department of Health is happy to announce a huge decline in the number of dengue fever cases. However, the concern has now shifted towards the recent outbreak of mumps.

As 2007 came to a close, an outbreak including 20 suspected cases and one confirmed case of mumps caused DOH to heighten their efforts in getting parents to vaccinate their children, especially youngsters, prior to returning to the classroom following the two-week holiday break.

Department of Health medical director Dr. Ivan Tuliau said that all of the suspected mumps cases were children from the Pava'ia'i and Faleniu area. Because of that, he is reminding all parents to make sure their children have received the two vaccination shots for mumps.

The first shot should be administered a little after the child's first birthday, while the second shot is recommended before the start of kindergarten.

Mumps is a viral disease that is preventable and is caused by a virus that usually spreads through saliva and affects parts of the body including the area behind the cheek, between the ear and the jaw. Mumps causes glands to swell and become painful.

Symptoms include fever, body aches, and ear pains. A good way to nurse a mumps victim back to health is to give them lots of water and plenty of rest.

Parents who have not brought their children in to get their vaccination for mumps are encouraged to do so, to avoid any unnecessary complications.

Those who think their child has mumps need to take the youngster right away to see a physician at either the LBJ Medical Center or the Tafuna Health Center. Those same children also need to be kept at home, away from school and church, to avoid the spread of the disease.

Because mumps is spread through saliva, those who are suspected to have the disease should not be permitted to share food, drinks, or eating utensils with others.

Children need to be taught how to cover their mouths when they sneeze or cough, and practice proper hygiene like washing their hands at all times.

Call the DOH main office at 633-4606 for any questions or concerns.

USEPA wants nominations from the Territory for Environmental Award

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is soliciting nominations from California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands, including American Samoa, for this year's Environmental Award.

Citizens are encouraged to nominate a friend, peer, or organization for the award.

Nominations can be submitted online beginning Monday, January 14 until February 17.

The program, now in its tenth year, seeks to recognize individuals and groups outside of the USEPA who made significant contributions to improve the environment in the year 2007.

Nominees may include scientists, teachers, journalists, citizen activists, young people, organizations, business representatives, public officials, and others committed to protecting public health and preserving our natural surroundings.

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Promotion of innovative ideas, techniques, and/or technologies,
- Ability to address an environmental problem or need,
- Accomplishment of stated goals,
- Ability of the program/activity to be replicated or widely shared,
- Collaboration with others,
- Clarity and effectiveness of the presentation, and
- Long term benefits for the environment

All applications will be reviewed by an EPA panel and select this year's finalists, who will receive notification by mid-March. Winners will be recognized at a special ceremony set to be held in San Francisco in mid-April.

For more information, and to submit a nomination form online, visit <http://www.epa.gov/region9/awards>

Questions regarding the program can be forwarded to the Environmental Information Center at (866) EPA-WEST or Wendy Chavez at (415) 947-4248.

Feleti Barstow Public Library offers computer classes for adults

The Feleti Barstow Public Library is inviting all adults 18 years old and older with no computer experience to sign up for the adult introductory computer classes which are two weeks long and generally offered every month.

January classes began Monday, January 14 and will conclude on Friday, January 25. Next month's classes are scheduled for February 4 -15.

Class sizes are limited to 20 people and registration is required. All participants are required to pay \$10 prior to the first class date and the money is refunded after the successful completion of the class.

Librarian Naomi Zimmer explained that students who fail to show up to class and do not complete the program will not receive a refund.

During the course, students will be introduced to computer components and get a crash course in basic computer language using Microsoft Word, setting up an e-mail account, and using the internet for research purposes.

According to Zimmer, the Feleti Barstow Public Library does what it can to offer the adult classes every month, or otherwise replace them with classes catered to high school students during after school hours and the summer months.

Every student who successfully completes the course will receive a certificate of recognition at the end of the program.

More information on the can be obtained by visiting the Library in Utulei or calling 633-5816.